

URAKSHA



Early Childhood Care and Education in India

LITTLE SCHOOL ON THE HILL



Child Education in Community Development

Vasudha Joshi

SIDH, Mussoorie

20
11/7/96

The SURAKSHA Series

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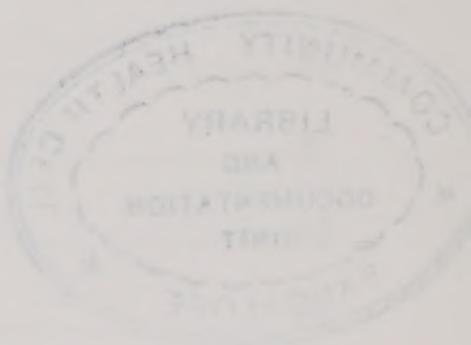
Early Childhood Care and Education in India
Volume 3

LITTLE SCHOOL ON THE HILL

Child Education in Community Development

by

Vasudha Joshi

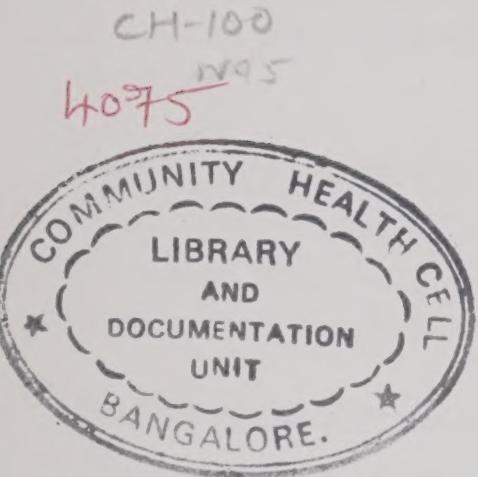


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FOREWORD

Every human being ultimately is the product of interaction between the genotype (inherent genetic make up) and the environment. While heredity determines potential, the home, health and educational environment determine whether young children bloom or remain "blossoms in the dust". There is a well-known saying - *as the twig is bent, so the branch will grow*. It is in this context that Early Childhood Care and Education assume critical significance with reference to giving the child an enabling environment for the full expression of his/her innate potential for physical and mental development.

I am happy that through the SURAKSHA series of publications, a careful chronicling of the many excellent examples of Early Childhood Care and Education in India is being undertaken. This series will enable scholars and researchers as well as policy makers and practitioners to learn from the rich diversity of experience available within our country in this field. Such an understanding is fundamental to learning from successes and thereby helping to replicate effective and economically viable models of day care.

This series has been lovingly put together and is the result of close cooperation among the many people who have worked hard on it. On behalf of the Foundation, I must particularly thank the members of the Advisory Committee, who have given unsparingly of their time and effort, the distinguished scholars who have written the case studies, the agencies whose work has been documented and the Aga Khan Foundation (India) for their support.

M. P. Swaminathan

M.S. Swaminathan

EDITOR'S NOTE

The SURAKSHA series has grown from an idea which has been germinating for a long time. Scholars have long felt the need for documentation of Early Childhood Education Care and Education programmes in India. While there has been a wealth of experience in the country, with many small-scale experiments under the leadership of outstanding thinkers and educational leaders, it has been realised that hardly any of it has been recorded for a wider public.

The vast diversity in the situations of women and children in the country implies that child care services, especially day care, would vary widely in response to local and specific needs. At the same time, programmes for young children, by their very nature must be highly personalised, direct, small in scale, and rooted in local culture and relationships. Diversity and responsiveness to needs are hence an essential characteristic of successful programmes for young children. In the last two decades, with the rapid expansion of child care programmes like the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) in the State sector, it has become all the more important to draw the attention of policy makers to the importance of the flexibility and responsiveness represented by these multiple approaches. Documentation has thus emerged as an essential tool for advocacy.

It was with the twin objectives of dissemination and advocacy that Project ACCESS embarked in 1993, with the support of the Aga Khan Foundation (India), on the project entitled **Multiple Approaches in ECCE in India**, with a view to bringing out a series of studies documenting innovative approaches to ECCE in India. Dr.T.S.Saraswati, Head, Department of Human Development and Family Studies, M.S. University of Baroda, who has for long been urging the need for such documentation, was an incomparable guide and adviser in launching the project. With the help of an Advisory Committee consisting of distinguished representatives from several disciplines, ranging from Child Development and Education to Management and Women's Studies, criteria were drawn up for

selection of programmes to be included in the series and procedures were developed for a participatory process of documentation.

The series of case-studies represents a wide range of experiences in terms of geography, auspices and structure. The locations range from the Himalayan region to the coastal South, from industrial metropolis to rural or tribal hamlets. The programmes are run by diverse institutions — voluntary agencies, trade unions, educational institutions and women's groups. The programmes include spontaneous private efforts as well as statutory obligations and government/non-government partnerships; they are employer-funded and union-sponsored, school-based or community based. The common element is a commitment to address the intersecting needs of women, young children and girls. In addition, each programme is need-based, client-oriented and responsive, a system of optimal size with a minimum life of three years, caters to lower socio-economic groups and is non-profit making in nature. The series title SURAKSHA was chosen for its rich resonance implying an all-embracing, nurturant care, visually represented in the logo; while the colour of each cover is intended to evoke the specific geographical context.

The process of developing the studies has been a participatory one, involving a researcher/writer working closely with the agency concerned, and providing opportunities for sharing and mutual learning among the agencies through a network and occasional meetings. The studies are process-oriented in nature and not merely descriptive, focussing both on the unique features and the replicable aspects of each programme, finances, sustainability, the child care worker, the organisational structure and relevant linkages. The concluding part in each case dwells on implications of the programme for wider policy initiatives for young children. An overview of the economics of child care is expected to follow the last study in the series.

This study explores, in depth, the process of developing an educational model appropriate to remote and sparsely populated hill areas, a territory where schools may often be too far for the very young to reach on foot. Told as a compelling personal narrative rich in

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anecdotal evidence, the case study documents the experiences of two young people equipped with a conscious educational philosophy, some practical skills and the vision and determination to use education as the entry point for development in a backward Himalayan region. With disarming candour, using the words of its principal actors and of teachers, parents and village people, it records both the strengths and the weaknesses of the approach, the distant goals and the day-to-day difficulties, the achievements and the failures, the insights and the hindsights. The author's voice is heard only on the last page.

At the end, a clear picture emerges of a viable, attainable educational model encompassing both child care and early primary education, and of the steps, the support structures and services needed to achieve it – a picture with far-reaching policy implications. In a situation where such significant small-scale experiments are little known even to other professionals in the field, a wider audience for this story could well become the starting point for policy debates and discussions which could trigger off educational renewal in some of the most backward regions.

March 1995

Mina Swaminathan
Series Editor

LITTLE SCHOOL ON THE HILL

CHILD EDUCATION IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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ABOUT THIS VOLUME

The Author

Vasudha Joshi, who has a Master's in the Sociology of Education from the Institute of Education in London, has worked in a variety of settings – running a bookshop, researching and reporting for television and campaigning with pressure groups. She lives in Calcutta and makes documentary films.

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1 HOW IT ALL BEGAN

The concept

SIDH, the organisation, was set up by Anuradha Joshi and Pawan Gupta in 1989. Anuradha had taught for several years in a Montessori nursery school and later on as a primary school teacher in Calcutta. Pawan had worked as an engineer in the corporate world. Both were dissatisfied with the limitations of their professional lives. Anuradha felt that social welfare work would provide her with a meaningful involvement in her work. Pawan concurred and they both decided to set up SIDH together. The aim of SIDH is integrated community development on a path of self-sustenance, and a great deal of emphasis has been placed on the development of human resources in the local community, with the hope that at some point it will be possible for local people to run their own programmes without outside help.

For Anuradha, the pre-primary school programme in SIDH brings together three influences which have had a profound effect on her world view - the Montessori method, Gandhi's emphasis on manual labour, and the *vipassana* technique of meditation, which believes that any meaningful change towards self-sustenance can be achieved only with an accompanying

change within the individual - a shift from *kripa* (benevolence of organisations, the state, God) to *karya* (the individual working out his/her own salvation, without blame or dependence on others).

It was in 1976 that she first encountered Madame Montessori's writings, and discovered a new respect for children: for them all activity is play, there is no split between pleasurable play and work. Learning through play and the use of sensorial materials to stimulate the boundless curiosity of the child were useful as techniques, she found, but what was equally if not more important was the stress on 'freedom', which translates operationally as self-sufficiency, and for her, is the key term that links together the three 'ideological' influences on her and her work. At the level of the individual child, freedom (self-sufficiency) means to be able to take decisions, and to be less dependent on adults. In the pre-primary schools, or the balwadis, this is promoted through '*swatantra khel*' (independent play) and teaching a child to take care of him/herself by learning to clothe and wash himself etc. (Exercises in Practical Life)

Anuradha believes there is a continuity between these aims of the programme which deal with the child and

the larger aims of the community programme, which are working towards the same objectives of self-sufficiency, independence and sustainability. For her, the crucial link is the change in attitude - from *kripa* to *karya* - which can be facilitated through meditation which emphasises freedom and individual effort. The activities in the balwadi reflect these different influences: *shanti khel* (silence activity) is inspired by *vipassana*, the stress on *vyavaharik karya* (exercises in practical life) by Gandhi's reflections on manual labour, and the emphasis on sensorial materials is an outcome of her exposure to Montessori methods.

The choice of Jaunpur

They arrived in Mussoorie in 1989 (why Mussoorie? The answer may lie in the many years Anuradha spent there as a child, or her origins from the neighbouring Kumaon hills, or both) and started visiting Jaunpur - a tribal block which has been denied the status of a government-approved tribal area. (Appendix 1 gives details of Jaunpur) They visited several villages in the Jaunpur block to ascertain their needs and demands. What emerged clearly from these exploratory surveys was the need for primary schools in the villages - a need, several villages articulated as their demand. So SIDH started the first school in Bhediyan village in March 1989. Employing only local people, familiar with the language and customs of Jaunpur,



A Jaunpuri homestead

created initial obstacles because of the low literacy rate in the area. Finally, 4 boys who had passed Class 10 were selected and provided intensive training, before they opened two other schools in August and December that year.

The balwadi programme

It was within six months of starting the school programme, that Anuradha and Pawan felt the need for a pre-primary school initiative. The 8-9 year olds brought their younger brothers and sisters, who were under their care, to the schools. This was creating problems for the teacher and

disrupting the schoolroom. Alternatively they would stay home to look after them, which was self-defeating for the project. This was the first perceived need for the balwadi programme.

Only after Pawan got a fellowship from SRUTI, Mahila Samakhya came up with a grant for a women's programme, SAMTA (Chakrata) offered to help with a stipend for the trainees and Uttarakhand Seva Nidhi offered support for balwadis and toilet construction, was it possible for SIDH to start working on balwadis from May 1990. This was a project that Anuradha was very enthusiastic about, as she was convinced that Montessori's method 'works' in practice and is invaluable as a tool for developing the potential of the child and the teacher.

The balwadi programme ties in with their objective of community development -

as Anuradha puts it “the dream of a model village”. She argues that the impact of a balwadi on the children is profound, leading to long-term change in attitudes to work, encouraging independence and concentration, and inculcating ‘desirable’ habits like using toilets, and cleanliness, which improve personal hygiene. Anuradha now sees it as the nucleus of their community development programmes. The access which the balwadi provides to mothers in the village, makes it possible to bring up related areas in the fields of health and nutrition, through *mahila dals* and other initiatives, such as introducing new crops and agricultural inputs; opening a nursery in the village and introducing appropriate technology and credit schemes. In the long term, she feels, balwadis can become a new community development model, inexpensive and yet appropriate, for the small and scattered hill villages.

For children all activity is play, there is no split between pleasurable play and work.

2 THE PROGRAMME GROWS

The development of the balwadi programme can be divided into five phases.

The first phase: May 1990 – Sept. 1990 - Beginnings

The first thing done by Anuradha and Krishna, the first member in SIDH, was to go and visit the balwadi training programme in Laxmi Ashram in Kausani. This exposed them to how balwadis were being run in rural hill areas with a group having a low literacy level. Feeling reasonably confident, they came back to Mussoorie to initiate the programme. They contacted and selected 8 young girls in villages who had passed Class 4 and 5 and were interested in volunteering their services and organised an in-house training programme. Here they concentrated on basic play methods for teaching: singing, dancing, telling stories and making up songs in Jaunpuri on numbers and days of the week. This resulted in an audio cassette of environmental songs for children and a book of songs and stories. (Appendix 2 gives details about teaching/learning materials developed by SIDH.) It was after this orientation course that four new balwadis were begun in villages where they had set up schools already.

Training sessions were also organised by SIDH to gear up for opening new balwadis in villages they had not worked in before. The trainees were familiarised with basic survey methods, how to interact with the villagers and consult the village women on whether they felt the need for a balwadi and the possibility of making the balwadi the nodal point for the *mahila dal* programme in the village. Each girl was asked to choose five villages and do an informal survey. As the decision to open new balwadis was constrained by the areas the girls were from, balwadis were opened in six more villages.

The sessions introduced play materials adapted from Montessori methods, such as number rods, sandpaper figures for sensorial development, methods of playing with water, silence activity to encourage concentration, sound boxes, counting games with matchboxes etc. and incorporated the informal chat sessions learnt from Laxmi Ashram. The balwadi teacher was exposed to the world outside her village and a familiar hill environment with women trainers and the warmth and affection shown to them was a reassuring introduction.

The second phase: Nov. 1990 – July 1991

- Training

In this phase there was intensive training organised for the balwadi teachers which had to be repeated every three months. This involved developing new toys from low cost materials and a lot of the same ground had to be covered and repeated again because of a high turnover of the girls in the first year, and the time involved in clarifying concepts. Also, teaching through play is much more difficult and demanding than the rote methods used generally in schools.

I remember the first training programme. I thought what a waste of time - how you pick up an object, how you keep it back. Why should we learn such things? I thought the children can do it anyhow - folding clothes for instance.

– Pavitra Rawat, Talogi Balwadi.

I think I have learnt a lot through the trainings – things I wouldn't pay attention to earlier. Then you discover how much the children copy you – if I take off my slippers outside the classroom, then they do the same. How you do something is important because they are observing you, how you handle a glass or a slate. – she says today.

This was the period when SIDH was very keen on doing a training film – to cut down on the intensive labour involved. A workshop was organised with other NGOs and funding organisations to explore the possibility; but the consensus appeared to be that it was area-specific and too

expensive a proposition for the benefits that emerged. The workshop did have other beneficial side-effects though - it got together a number of people experienced in balwadis, and as a result of the discussions during the workshop, Anuradha felt her understanding of the concept and potential of balwadis as a tool for community participation developed.

Apart from the regular training sessions, there were monthly meetings of all the balwadi teachers closely monitored by Anuradha and/or the Balwadi supervisor. They mainly focussed on determining the absenteeism of the teachers, apart from the drop-out rate in balwadis which still remains the primary indicator of how successful the balwadi is. Teachers attempting to bribe children to the balwadi by offering sweets and sugar had to be dealt with. These sessions by Anuradha were directive, with little participation by the trainees.

Third phase: Aug 1991 - May 1992

Support materials

Training sessions continued but it went beyond the basic ground covered in the first year. They included sessions on the difference between a school and a balwadi, and a balwadi and home, the reason for the different methods employed, the world view of a child and how to build on the natural curiosity a child has about the world, how to create the ideal atmosphere for a child, and how the

balwadi can be used as a base to raise other questions/issues in the village.

The material used in this phase of training has been published as a booklet - *Hamari Balwadi*, which also has a section on developing low-cost play materials which they had worked on in their sessions, and adapting the teaching aids, so they could make them themselves at a lower cost, or get the Class 3, 4 and 5 schoolchildren to make them as part of craft classes. Subsequently SIDH organised a training session with Mobile Creches in Delhi, who held a workshop on the teaching aids they had developed using inexpensive materials.

In this phase they also decided to incorporate traditional teaching methods - chart reading by rote, for example, primarily as a response to the villagers, who were disapproving of 'so much singing and dancing and no teaching', but subsequently found that they can be useful too. Reading something aloud does make for familiarity and pleasure for the child. The groups now spend upto a maximum of 10 minutes a day on rote learning and it usually follows a small group/independent play session or demonstration. (Appendix 3 gives the daily time-table)

Further, during this period, a training of trainers (TOT) workshop was organised with the help of Radha Bhatt from Laxmi Ashram, Kausani, and this led on to the next phase, where the teachers gradually

and then more confidently took on the task of training others.

The fourth phase: Sept. 1991 - Oct. 1992 - Consolidation

The fourth phase was of consolidation, and increase in balwadi trainers, who made rapid progress in this stage. Demonstrations of teaching methods were held in the villages to explain how children were being taught. Regular Parent - Teacher meetings were held and experimenting with teaching aids continued.

The balwadi teachers were particularly enthusiastic about the doll's house that was demonstrated at Mobile Creches. Some new games - *seema gyan* - the boundary game, which then became part of the balwadi curriculum, were also suggested. This training also had a special component to train illiterate women and as a result it brought in several older women to join the programme - ten of them joined the sessions, of whom three are today actively part of the programme as assistant *sahayikas* in balwadis.

This period also saw the women make several trips outside to Delhi etc which was valuable exposure for them. They tried out educational toys that had been produced by the Centre for Learning Resources in Ahmedabad, but found them expensive. Several aids in the area of health produced by Voluntary Health Association of India (VHAI) were used, and other inputs like animal husbandry



Learning together



Learn while you play

and mushroom growing were brought up as possibilities for income generation.

Branching out

The major achievement in this period was the development of more participatory methods of training and the building of a strong and confident team successfully able to impart training to others, and to constantly work on new improvements and innovations in their own programmes. They have helped training sessions in Laxmi Ashram, Kausani, the Bhuvaneshwari Mahila Ashram, the Mussoorie Gramin Vikas Samiti, and the IAS Academy in Mussoorie and also held a training workshop for a women's development organisation in Delhi.

The other major change in this period was structural reorganisation within

SIDH. Till May 1992, the balwadi programme along with the *mahila dal* programme was under a separate supervisor, which insulated it relatively from the other programmes going on in the village. Logistical problems were what dictated the restructuring of the programmes under geographical clusters. Three to four villages which were geographically contiguous were organised under one cluster with a supervisor in charge. This made monitoring relatively easier. The positive effect of this has been the closer involvement of other supervisors in the team with the balwadi programme, and its being linked much more closely to other initiatives. For instance, when the training for women who were illiterate was being organised through Mobile Crches, a literacy drive was organised to co-incide with the training programme.

It was decided to incorporate traditional teaching methods - chart reading by rote, for example, primarily as a response to the villagers, who were disapproving of 'so much singing and dancing and no teaching', but subsequently found that they can be useful too. Reading something aloud does make for familiarity and pleasure for the child.

3 GAINING CONFIDENCE

Phase five : Oct. 1992 - Sept. 1994 - Towards self-monitoring

The major change in this period was a shift towards self-evaluation rather than being monitored by the supervisors or Anuradha. This has been accompanied by the teachers articulating their needs and demands much more. A calendar that SIDH published was in response to the problems of structuring the curriculum for the various age-groups that have emerged

in the balwadi over three years. (Table 1). The first draft, written by Anuradha, along with the supervisors, was finally published after a year's experimentation and feedback from the teachers. Since the calendar was devised in October 1992, the group has come up on their own with real initiatives: for instance, the *sahayika* diary, an easy device developed to keep records, to help compile their responses and experiences. A collection of stories, poems and songs is to be brought out shortly by SIDH.

Table 1

Balwadi curriculum

S.No	Group	Age (in years)	Curriculum
1	0	1-2 1/2	The younger siblings of balwadi children. They still play with toys. Need to be toilet-trained and looked after by the Assistant (<i>sahayika</i>)
2	1	2 1/2 - 3 1/2	Learn through songs, dances and exercises in practical life.
3	2	3 1/2 - 4 1/2	Learn through sensorial material and play-way methods, number from 1-10, and language through sounds and some alphabets.
4	3	4 1/2 - 5 1/2	Reading and writing with board work. Preparing for Class 1. All alphabets and numbers from 1-100
5	NFE	6 and above	Extending to Class I & II. Use of workbooks I & II.

Perceptible change

Now, SIDH's in-house sessions deal with issues of freedom vs discipline in the classroom, refining the idea of *swatantra khel* (independent play) or developing new counting games. The team has come up with other ideas: every Saturday is spent on four different projects where the children help them with:

- Cleaning
- Repairing Play Materials
- Making New Play Materials
- Mending Clothes



Open school?

The process of change in the report card formats indicates the distance they have come. Initially, they only had to tick boxes with the progress indicators. Now the teachers have graduated to writing out evaluations of cleanliness, curiosity, creativity and orderliness of the child.

Balwadi – school interaction

Shortly after the structural reorganisation within SIDH, the other supervisors who were involved in primary school activities and quite distant and patronising towards the balwadis were exposed to the balwadi programme through in-house workshops. As Pawan Gupta says :

The real breakthrough though, which was completely accidental, came in June '93 when the school teachers and supervisors were working on an alternative school curriculum. They had come up with four broad topics: Nature, Self, Awareness and Life Science. When they were attempting to break these up for the different classes, they came up with categories that were identical to those used in balwadis. For example, Nature was broken up into Air, Water, Earth, Flora, Fauna and Time, which were the same as those formulated in the balwadi curriculum. When they were struggling with how to teach these for Classes 1 and 2, it was the balwadi supervisors who came up with the most positive and creative suggestions.

As a result of this workshop, several of them wanted to undergo balwadi training

as they felt they had a lot to learn from play-way methods. Since it was the schoolteachers who spontaneously came up with this as their need, it did lead to a much closer integration of the school and balwadi programmes and a lot of interest and creative inputs from other members of the team.

Hukum, one of the supervisors, organised a workshop in Dec '93, to break up the balwadi curriculum into daily lesson plans, as a further development from the balwadi curriculum as set out in the calendar. Environment-related theme words such as 'water' were chosen. Water was broken down into why, what, how, when and where. The answers formed the content from which those relevant to under 5-year-olds were prioritised, and ways of teaching these were discussed. Then the daily lesson plan was finalised.

Similarly, Shobhan, another supervisor, on his own initiative, organised a workshop in early '94 for the balwadi teachers, on interactions with the village. This was conducted by Pavitra, one of the balwadi teachers and was held in a village with the active participation of the villagers. The positive effect of Pavitra holding the training, as opposed to a supervisor, were many. With her holding the training, the social distance between the trainer and trainee was non-existent, and she was therefore much more effective. The villagers decided to contribute labour and a bag of cement towards building a slide for their balwadi.

A giant leap ahead

From late '93, Anuradha's role has become much more of a distant supervisory one, with the initiatives and enthusiasm coming from the team. The group has now decided to concentrate on building a model balwadi, and one of the more creative teachers from the school team has been roped in for it.

Several of them wanted to undergo balwadi training as they felt they had a lot to learn from play-way methods.

They are also coming up with more ambitious programmes like working towards making the schools and balwadis financially self-sufficient. Following the June workshop, the schools decided to part-finance their activities through income-generation programmes, which since June '93, they have been doing successfully with a nursery and the sale of greeting cards using dry wildflowers. These are being marketed through elite local schools like Woodstock and the funds generated go to the village corpus fund. Plans are on to expand on these by taking up activities like candle and chalk-making and also by charging school fees where parents can afford to pay them.

The group is now formulating annual and 5-year plans for the

programmes. In July '94, Mira led the balwadi group in formulating the annual plan by prioritising areas they felt needed to develop further. They split the year into 3-month units that would tackle the following areas: cleanliness, *swatantra khel*, village relationships and personal growth. They decided to concentrate on cleanliness, a problem difficult to tackle because of its vague generality. To see if quantifying it would help, cleanliness was broken up into 10 points (clean nose, face, hair, teeth etc). Daily marks were being given to the children, upto a maximum of 10, and the evaluation at the end of three months confirms that it is working very successfully so far.

Sessions on personal growth are held. Why do people find it difficult to articulate or communicate? Is it lack

Though community development has always been linked to the balwadi teacher, her role as facilitator was handicapped by the fact that most of the teachers were very much younger than the mothers in the village they related to.

of information or feelings of inferiority? These sessions are still continuing and

a similar exercise of breaking up the problems is being attempted.

Their ambitious five-year-plan is to make balwadis totally self-sustaining financially, by making the balwadis a *mahila dal* programme. Though community development has always been linked to the balwadi teacher, her role as facilitator was handicapped by the fact that most of the teachers were very much younger than the mothers in the village they related to. Today it is different, as the balwadi teachers are older and more experienced.

Future programmes

Over the next five years, training more local village women as balwadi teachers to take over running the balwadis is being planned. A beginning has already been made in this direction successfully, since 1993, with the appointment of assistant *sahayikas* who are paid as *mahila dal* helpers. These women, whose activities would be monitored, would become literate within a year and would be paid from the *mahila dal* account.

Between the next two to five years, ideally, a step-by-step withdrawal by the teachers will take place with the responsibility of running the balwadi handed over to the village women who will manage them. Wherever income-generating programmes are not successful after the next two years, the village should be willing

to support the teacher in kind, such as payment in local produce.

The group is now working towards an alternative model which could be much cheaper than a school and could be used for other educational and community activities. Combining two balwadis of adjoining villages, which extend upto Class 2 in the mornings, with a night school for older children or adults, it will be run by the same teachers. They would try and motivate older children who are able, to go to the nearby government school.

SIDH already has a pool of ex-Class 5 children from their schools who are available to volunteer and teach in these night schools, and in the long run, may be motivated to take over the running of these centres. This experiment has just

begun in two adjoining villages - Jhinsi and Nautha.

The school team has also been working on workbooks which would be used in these centres. In the schools they have devised a supplementary syllabus which concentrates on linking other subjects together in a local perspective, and practical knowledge related to their lives. It also has information for reflections on social injustice: issues of gender, class, community and consumerism are raised, as are the intellectual and manual labour divide, the rural/urban, and language divide. The team is currently working on modifying this as a handbook for the night school in the education centres.

In retrospect, there is no denying the breakthrough that has been made,

Table 2

The growth pattern of SIDH

Year	Centres	Teachers	Children	Supervisors
1990	4	4	84	1
1991	10	12	170	1
1992	15	20	220	2
1993	12	15	225	3 Cluster-in-charges
1994	12	15	250	1 RP & CI's

particularly since 1994, though it has always necessarily been a long and slow process.

Anuradha adds :

With the benefit of experience, we're much more confident. We've learnt a lot and if we were beginning the programme afresh, we would have this to say about curriculum.

Traditional teaching methods - like learning aloud by rote, can also be useful, when used in conjunction with other playway methods.

The balwadi is different from a school, and also very different from a home - freedom operates within the rules that are laid down.

The less the gap between the trainer and the trainee -social and intellectual - the more effective the training . Motivation also increases if the trainer is part of the same peer group.

It can help to tackle a problem by defining it - by breaking it down into components.

Playway methods are important not only to stimulate the child, but also the teacher.

The freedom versus discipline dichotomy can be handled better by shifting the focus to within the individual e.g. encouraging the teacher to monitor herself.

I would not hold such directive training sessions, with inputs in skill/ knowledge as I did earlier. I would begin from personal memories/experiences of the teacher, and encourage more creative inputs, fairly early on, and concentrate on personal growth/attitude change.

Competition within the team can be a useful motivating tool.

I would be stricter with recruitment and the most important attribute would be the sensitivity of the teacher.

The group is now working towards an alternative model which could be much cheaper than a school and could be used for other educational and community activities. Combining two balwadis of adjoining villages, which extend upto Class 2 in the mornings, with a night school for older children or adults, it will be run by the same teachers.

4 THE CHILD EDUCATORS

The problems

When the balwadi programme was launched in 1989, SIDH began with a disadvantage. Young girls who may have passed Class 4 and 5, and who could be trained to work in balwadis, had to be depended upon.

Another problem was lack of training material geared to such young girls, who were barely literate. There was a high drop-out rate, because many of them left after getting married. It took a great deal of repetition and clarification of concepts before they began innovating and adapting the material.

Yet again, the expectation of villagers who had heard of ICDS and anganwadi government programmes and expected handouts, had to be confronted.

It took some time and effort to explain that, on the contrary, the villagers would be expected to contribute towards the setting up of the school/balwadi building.

There were other personal blocks:

I remember being quite revolted at the thought of wiping a child's snot, or cleaning their bottoms. We'd all say, "Yes, yes, we'll do it," but we were all

quite repelled at the thought. I remember for a long time, I couldn't bring myself to wipe a child's nose - I'd take the kid to the tap and let it be washed off. Then I'd watch Anuradhadhi do it when she came to visit a balwadi, and felt if she could do it, so could I. Then I gradually began.

— Mira, now Supervisor, Balwadis.

Balwadi – a career?

The reasons for the balwadi teachers joining were many and varied: for some of them it was accidental, while some others joined after watching the balwadis function, or had friends teaching and then decided to join. Pratibha, for example, says :

I liked the idea of being a madam.

For Savitri it was a calculated decision. She felt if she was involved in teaching, then it would further her own education, which for her, was the main motive.

Anita Rawat, who joined because she thought she'd see the world, felt it would act as a stepping stone. There are at least two women in the group who think like her — Rukmini and Sumitra.

For others, it was looking for a job. This is particularly, though not exclusively, true for the urban recruits from Mussoorie. Mira, who is from a village and is now a supervisor says :

I had finished my inter. and was wondering what to do. I got some forms to join nursing and was going to apply. My father heard about SIDH and I came here. I wanted a job and thought that it would be like teaching in a school. I didn't know anything about the philosophy of SIDH then.

Sumitra Rawat felt she didn't enjoy herself. She used to get impatient with children and she left to join the Home Guards. There she says she had a good time, but when she saw people being killed and when two women from her group were brutally assaulted at Tyooni, she decided to leave and come back and work in a balwadi.

Savitri Chauhan, on the other hand, says she wouldn't choose to do any other job, even if it paid much more. She gets involved and really enjoys the work:

I wouldn't be happy doing anything else. I am sure.

Savitri Tamta, Bhediyan balwadi, has this to say :

I wanted a job. For me, the Kausani training was a nice holiday. At first I found it very difficult to manage children. They would keep running away. It

was a nightmare. I used to think – what am I doing in this godforsaken village? Being from Mussoorie, I had problems with the Jaunpuri language. After six months I liked it. I still lose my temper sometimes. But especially in this last year I've got more interested. I'd like to make a model balwadi.

The teachers blossom

One significant impact that the balwadi programme has had on the teachers is that they are all studying further. The combination of institutional encouragement and peer pressure has had a positive effect. They are also in a position now to pay for their forms or exam. fees, or borrow books from the SIDH library or from each other. They range from Naro Devi and Kasturi, a 15-year-old assistant *sahayika*, studying for the Class 2 and 3 examinations, to Mira, studying for her B.A. exams.

I was in Class 8 when I joined. Now, I have passed school and am going to take the inter. exam. this year. I'm planning to carry on studying for as long as I can. If I had stayed on in the village, I would have dropped out after Class 8. – Pavitra Rawat

The development in terms of human resources has been the most important achievement of SIDH in the balwadi programme. Not only are all of them studying further on their own, but they say they have gained a great deal in terms of confidence. This is confirmed by Shoban, a supervisor.

I was very shy when I joined. I wouldn't lift my head up. I was very uncomfortable about meeting people... you can see for yourself how much I talk now. We've also learnt a lot about other useful things: health and how to manage first aid in an emergency.

— Pavitra Rawat, Riyat Balwadi.

I was scared of taking responsibility earlier, since then I've got used to it. I also enjoy the work and the children.

— Savitri Chauhan, Talogi Balwadi.

However, not all of them are as outgoing as Pavitra and Savitri. Surmila Rani adds :

I'm not so shy in my own village but outside it is more difficult. I thought a job would help me. Besides preparing for the high school exam, I'm also reading stories in Champak and other magazines.

Similarly, Naro Devi, who trained when they were having a drive to bring in illiterate women into the programme, feels she has gained a great deal from the exposure and training:

I assist the teacher and if she's not there for any reason then I run the balwadi myself... I learnt about colours. I didn't know about dates before, now I know... Personally, I think I learnt a lot by just going to Delhi. Paharis are so scared, women won't even go to Kempty...you learn about the world if you go out...I've now got myself a gobar gas plant and now my husband will make the tea for me sometimes because its so easy to

run. It also saves me a lot of time collecting firewood and you know how long a fire can take to light in the monsoons...

Family pressures

Some of them have decided to resist pressure from home to get married. Two of the women, Mira and Savitri got married after the programme began. Mira had an unorthodox wedding - she married a co-worker in SIDH, and retains her unmarried name. He is supportive and positively encourages her to work.

Savitri's has been a very different story. She joined the programme just as it was starting off, and was very enthusiastic. She was slated to take over as the supervisor, as hers was the best balwadi in all of Garhwal. Her parents put a lot of pressure on her to get married. She agreed, but only to someone who would allow her to continue working and studying. They found someone who agreed. Three months after she got married, she got pregnant and he wouldn't allow her to go out of town for training or spend a night away. This made it impossible for her to get involved in training workshops. She now has two children, is desperately overworked, and just cannot make the kind of contributions she is capable of, to the programme. She says it is difficult with two children.

The events in Savitri's life have had a big impact on some of the others. They have been resisting fierce pressure from home to have arranged marriages.



To school with big sister

Pavitra feels that her family has stopped pressurising her to get married after she started working. Rama's family has accepted her decision not to marry. In fact, she recently helped with financial arrangements when her younger sister got married and since she started working has acquired more 'weight' in the family: She is consulted on all important decisions, which was not the case earlier.

Personal growth

There has been considerable progress within the group. Absenteeism has improved considerably, and they are much more self-motivated than was the case earlier. These shifts are apparent in the changes that have taken place in monitoring procedures. In 1991-92 it was the supervisor who did the monitoring

with the help of a close-ended checklist. In 1992-93 a new open-ended checklist with more space for descriptive processes was introduced. Since 1994 it is the teachers who monitor themselves. They give reports on their work, on reasons for poor attendance of children if applicable, on maintenance of play materials, on how they handle children aged 6+ or under two, how they approach children who don't attend the balwadi, what they are doing about the women's group, the night school and education centres.

They have improved their interpersonal skills and now handle their problems and seek solutions amongst themselves wherever they can. Some of them related how they had attempted to solve the problem of children consistently coming dirty to the balwadi. For three

consecutive days, the teacher had left early and gone to their homes to clean the children. From the fourth day, the situation improved considerably. Prabha was having a problem coping by herself with the three groups in her balwadi. Rukmini volunteered to show her how she managed. Similarly, they exchange notes on how they can sort out the problem of 3-year-olds coming with their younger siblings. Two suggestions were mooted in the group: one, to get a helper to take care of them; where there was a single teacher running the balwadi, maybe she could get the older children to help?

The development since the beginning of the programme has been substantial. The teachers display a great deal more initiative, and are more enthusiastic.

After the first training in Kausani, which was about how to teach children through songs and stories, the next two to three training sessions were repeating the same things. I found myself getting very bored. It was only the trainer who would talk and explain how to do something. Now its different - we discuss our own problems and the suggestions also come from the group.

– Savitri Tamta, Mussoorie town.

After I saw Pavitra holding the training workshop, I felt I could do it too. Now things are more structured, especially after we devised the curriculum... We have monthly meetings to exchange

experiences. Earlier the girls were much more hesitant, they wouldn't speak. There is also an element of competition which helps. They have contributed to the diary, they suggested adding more pages and having a daily instead of a weekly page. They have a lot of enthusiasm, maybe because the only other option is to get married. But they've moved ahead a lot inspite of most of them having to do a lot of housework (fetching grass, cooking, working in the fields etc). I think the main personal impact has been education.

– Mira, Supervisor, Balwadis.

A great deal of time and effort has gone into, and continues to be expended on, tackling problems of self-confidence. It is a nebulous area which is difficult to quantify. They had two in-house meetings to discuss personal growth. Here they evaluated themselves and each other, and discussed parent-adult-child interactions. In the annual plan, they had also decided to spend three months in the year looking more closely at some questions raised during the meeting.

Despite the obvious progress, and that is apparent also in the increased respect the balwadi teachers get from the villagers now, Anuradha and some supervisors feel that the balwadi group is still way behind the school group which has shown leadership, and a vision for the future. The school group will not accept anything she says till they are convinced about it. She

finds them more challenging to work with as a result and says she has learnt a great deal from them in the last year. It is not possible for her to say the same for the balwadi group. This definitely frustrates her.

Remuneration

When queried about wages, the teachers were quite reticent. (Table 3) There is a consensus that the wages are not enough for those who have to buy food, while for others who get food from their village it is adequate. They are also aware of the fact that they do get paid more than the government anganwadi worker, and other balwadi teachers working through other NGOs in the hills. The government pays a flat Rs.250 to anganwadi workers and Uttarkhand Sewa Nidhi, which financially supports balwadis in the hill areas through disbursing government funds, has reservations in financing SIDH's balwadis.

They have few complaints about working conditions, as they are able to solve them on their own. The wages of the senior balwadi teacher and the junior school teacher are the same, as the balwadi teacher works for 3-4 hours compared to the school teacher who works for 5-6 hours on a teaching day. Both are expected to work on other initiatives in the village beyond their teaching responsibilities. The senior school teacher is also a facilitator and is responsible for initiating community development programmes in the village.

Educational qualification is one factor in the different wage scales in SIDH, but mobility within the categories is not dependent on educational qualification. A junior balwadi teacher who has passed Class 5 would move up the scale depending on her performance, and several teachers have switched from school to balwadi and vice versa, mainly in the senior balwadi teacher/junior

Table 3

The wage structure in SIDH

Category	Pay Scale, Rs./month
Balwadi Teacher - Junior	300-20-600
- Senior	425-25-900
Balwadi Helper	150
School Teacher - Junior	425-25-900
- Senior	600-30-1800
Office Staff - Clerical	600-30-1800
- Supervisory	700-35-2450
- Senior Supervisory	1200-50-4500

school teacher category, with no difference in their pay scales.

In addition, they get an ex-gratia amount depending on performance, which varies from 1 week to 1 month's salary, paid holiday for a month, which is encashable if they desire, and the option of joining the LIC's 'money back' scheme. This covers them for accident and life insurance, and would pay them Rs 5000 every 5 years and Rs 45,000 in the 20th year. If they choose to join the scheme, then SIDH pays one-third of the contributions.

Strategies for motivation

Besides, delinking the wage structure, SIDH has tried several ways to get around the balwadi/school divide. The strategy of encouraging individuals has been successful in motivating some teachers, but has also caused heartburn among others. At a discussion, Shanti, one of the teachers said:

There is a tendency to elevate one person and dismiss the others. Someone may talk less and do more. We're not appreciated enough for the work we do.

This provoked protests from most of the supervisors:

Encouragement needs positive performance. Otherwise for how long can the supervisor just carry on encouraging people? He will criticise and scold after that.

— Hukum.

I feel that the drive has to come from the person in the end. The training is the same for everyone. After that its up to the person.

— Shobhan.

Shanti is perceived as lazy by the supervisors, and the 'competition' is working to motivate her. Subsequent to this conversation, Shanti is coming up with new innovations.

But Mira would prefer to be more cautious about using competition as a tool. It is a double-edged weapon and she feels it may lead to individuals offering less support to each other within the group, with each person wanting to be a star.

Overall, Anuradha feels that with whatever different motives they joined, some of them do enjoy their work a great deal and the main motivating factor, she feels, is the feedback they get from the villages. But more important has been the confidence they have developed from being part of the team, and in working together as one.

Competition is a double-edged weapon. It may lead to individuals offering less support to each other.

5 IMPACT OF THE PROGRAMME

When SIDH chose Jaunpur as the base for operations, there was no other NGO working in this area except one health-based missionary organisation, which had done some work in this area. The people had little contact with 'outsiders' apart from some government schemes which had been implemented there. SIDH's activities depended on the needs of the villagers and they were clear that they would only take up projects where there was active involvement and participation by the villagers.

This was how the schools programme began - it was a demand from the villagers. However, the balwadis when they began, were a need perceived not by the villagers, but the school teachers in SIDH's primary schools. That did make for a great deal of difference in the attitude of the villagers. The first year and a half was, as a result, an uphill struggle for the balwadi programme.

Wooing the villagers

Winning the villagers over was necessarily a slow process. It was only in the second year of the programme, that they really worked at it. The balwadi teams composed Jaunpuri songs to enthuse the village.

*Come to the land of balwadis
And see how much affection children
can get
When you send your children there
It makes your work a little lighter
They'll find a direction, and security,
And they'll be happy
And you won't worry about them
When mothers go to the steep hillside to
fetch grass
Children will get love in the balwadi
They will play and learn
Through songs and games*

There were *mahila dal* meetings at which the teachers demonstrated their methods - how through a song or a game children were learning numbers and other skills. Pavitra says of this period:

*I would often find the villagers
listening in to the sessions quietly
from outside the room. They would quietly
check to see if I was doing what I had
demonstrated.*

Regular parent-teacher meetings began to be held to discuss problems. The *mahila dal* meetings would also include discussions on health and nutrition, including discussing and exchanging nutritious recipes with local foodstuffs. They would read out *Hamaru Raibar*,

SIDH's newsletter that contains a lot of useful information – details of funds allocated to villages under Jawahar Rozgar Yojna schemes, other subsidies and schemes available like solar cookers and bio-gas plants, water harvesting, accounts of agricultural experiments both positive and negative. Besides, once a year, after the winter, when the women are relatively free compared to the rest of the year, they organise a *mahila mela* on the 8th of March. Here they have an exhibition and sale of local things which the women bring for sale. They relax, share experiences and sing songs. In the last two years, they have also distributed prizes for women who have become literate.

The village women have gained directly as a result. Earlier they were growing only corn - now a number of them successfully grow potatoes, peas, new varieties of wheat and rice. Talogi last year decided to set aside some land for a nursery where they want to experiment further with other crops. In 1992, the women in Bhediyan discussed the enormous amount of time spent in threshing wheat and took a loan from SIDH to buy a threshing machine. The experiment was so successful that another village got together to buy one - without a loan. In Bhatoli, the women decided to build a bathroom for women.

In 1993, SIDH published a guide, which covers areas such as literacy, health, income generation possibilities and

agricultural inputs, animal husbandry, fuel and fodder inputs.

Gradual acceptance

These other inputs and the increasing enthusiasm of some balwadi teachers led to a change in the perception of the villagers:

It was a year before we convinced them of the value of the balwadi. Slowly, we built a rapport. Now we discuss health or individual children or cleaning the village. Once a month we bring in Mr Tripathi (the agricultural expert) to give information on seeds...It's improving our area, I'd like to extend the mahila dals to some other villages.

– Pavitra.

Our kids study instead of being at home. The schools won't take such young children.

– Khimdev Devi, Talogi.

I'm looking after my grandchildren and if they're around I get that much less work done. My daughter-in-law works in the fields, my son works in Kempty, so it affects me more than anyone else. It doesn't affect men that much, what affects them more is finding out about schemes and loans.

– Bhagwan Devi, Talogi.

It is very difficult for children to adjust to going to school. Its easier when they've been in the balwadi. Its helping women get together to work in the fields - earlier when we got back from the field it would take us time to find them. Now we



All part of the day's work



Solving a problem

know where they are...there's no hospital close by, there's a nurse far away in Kempty, so the balwadis help. We've sorted out our water problem with the help of the mahila dals.

— Tara Devi, Talogi.

Earlier, the balwadi used to be erratic. Not any more. We built the building ourselves. Eight days in a month the govt school is closed anyway. This way they can stay out of the muck and learn something.

— Surjan Devi, Riyat.

Initially, it was just song and dance. Now we see them working on slates. We know why we should send them food to eat in the balwadi - so they learn to wash their hands before and after eating. We also know, if we don't have the time, they'll get cleaned at the balwadi. We get some rest. They also become clever in the balwadi.

— Phainto Devi, Talogi.

It was three years after the programme began that the village began to see for themselves how much better the balwadi children performed in schools compared to others.

If they go to the balwadi, they learn faster and much more. My son went to the balwadi before joining the govt school when he was four. He knows all the letters in the alphabet and tables upto 5. His friends who went to the government school don't know the first letters in the alphabet.

— Naro Devi, Riyat.

The school teachers have also perceived a visible difference among the school children - between those who join from a balwadi and those who don't. Mahipal, a supervisor, claims there is a distinct difference between the two: the balwadi children are not so shy, and are much more outspoken and articulate. This is confirmed by others, including government school teachers - since a number of balwadi graduates join the government schools later - who say that when they join Class 1 they are already familiar with a lot of the curriculum, besides being used to the idea of a school.

Educational achievements

Though there are no statistics available to assess the impact of the balwadi on children who have gone on to other schools, the performance of children in the Sarabtalla government school suggests that children who have been through the balwadis perform better. In Sarabtalla all the children who have stood first in class are from SIDH balwadis. In Class 1, the children who have stood first, second and third are from SIDH balwadis.

Sunita studied for three years in the Kandi balwadi. When she was 6, she joined the govt. school in Sarabtalla in Class 1. She was so far ahead of the others that after the half-yearly exams the school promoted her to Class 2. She is still way ahead of the others after jumping a year. Her mother says its unlikely they would



Sharing the family chores

have sent her to school at all if it hadn't been for the balwadi opening in Kandi. Now she is doing so well, they intend sending her to school at least till Class 8.

It is this more than anything else that has led to a reevaluation of the balwadis in the eyes of the villagers. The brilliant performance of the SIDH primary school students last year in the board exams - with one student topping the list, all students getting a first division, and 23 distinctions - has also helped to raise the credibility of SIDH, and by extension, the balwadis as well.

Pavitra says of Talogi:

If I fall ill and don't open the balwadi, the villagers immediately come home to find out what the matter

is. They offer to take me to the doctor in Mussoorie. They care.

Its a mutual process, since she often does the same for several villagers, bringing them to a hospital in Mussoorie and following up their medical complaints.

Since the balwadis opened, the girls who are expected to take care of them, can take their younger wards to the balwadi and continue their education. While the enrolment of girls in SIDH schools has increased from 15% to 80%, balwadis provide the only access to education in villages where there are no govt. or SIDH schools for even 10-12 year old girls. Overall it is clear that girls predominate in the balwadis and non-formal school, and boys in the govt/SIDH

schools (male-to-female ratio in balwadis is 1:1.3, night schools 1:2, and in SIDH schools it is 1.81:1). Once they are 10 years old, many girls are pulled out of school to share greater responsibilities at home. In Bhatoli village, as many as 15 girls do not go to school and have continued their studies only through the non-formal classes run by SIDH in the evening.

Wider issues

The balwadis and schools run by SIDH are also part of a health awareness programme run by SHARE, a voluntary organisation providing health inputs for Jaunpur block. As a result, 10-15 children on average in each village get immunised, and have participated in health campaigns like iodine deficiency awareness.

Cleanliness is clearly Anuradha's priority. It is a debatable issue to what extent the emphasis placed on cleanliness and hygiene is an urban middle-class imposition. Certainly, it has been an integral part of their programme. Anuradha says :

Schools was the demand of the villagers, clean villages was our demand in return.

Preventive health measures - clean water, sanitation, toilet construction (or covering excreta with mud so that it replenishes the soil) are central to SIDH's community development agenda and the balwadi programme. Anuradha

estimates that 8 out of the 15 balwadi teachers, who have been with the programme for more than 3 years have internalised these values.

Other initiatives are continuing with the women's groups: Bhatoli is currently engaged in planting fodder species, the Kandi women have collected money in a fixed deposit. They are beginning a new experiment in poultry farming. Customary law in Jaunpur ensures that any money generated through poultry farming belongs exclusively to women.

There are problems too. Bhediyan village is very upset because SIDH decided to close the balwadi there. The tussle is over the venue. Anuradha says:

They are a rich village comparatively. If they want the balwadi, they should be willing to put in more. Its just not practical to function from a veranda.

Some hindsights

Anuradha, looking back, says about village interaction:

In a village, the balwadi programme should be integrated firmly with other work in the village, right from the beginning.

Women should be actively involved in running the balwadi right from its inception.

Enforce rules right from the beginning to increase accountability, including taking hard decisions if necessary to close down the balwadi.

Do a more systematic survey to determine the distance of the village from the government school.

Demand fees wherever people can afford to pay.

Demand a greater commitment from the community including voluntary labour in the balwadi - at least 15 minutes to half an hour each day.

Towards making the programme financially self-sustaining, encourage the villagers to get involved in other income

generation programmes so that a percentage contribution could be made towards the balwadis.

Avoid the 'balwadi' nomenclature. Call them 'hamari bal pathshala' (little schools), so there is less resistance to the idea. All villagers prefer the term "Schools".

We were hesitant - and squeamish - about making demands from the village earlier. Today we're not - it makes for more mutual respect that way.

Schools was the demand of the villagers, clean villages was our demand in return, that is, preventive health measures - clean water, sanitation and toilet construction.

6 ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

Towards formal structure

For the first year and a half, SIDH had no formal structure. In this period there were 7-8 people working in the organisation, but there were informal allocations of work between them.

In early 1991, with the expansion of the organisation to 20-25 people, they divided the work areas into three: the school group, the balwadi/ *mahila dal* and sanitation, and people divided their responsibilities accordingly, with Pawan and Anuradha overseeing their work. This was the first time that two supervisors were appointed to oversee the schools and the balwadi/*mahila dal* programme.

In mid 1992, with the growth of the organisation to a strength of 40 people, they devised a more formal organisational structure, which they hoped would increase the motivation of the team as it delegated a considerable amount of responsibility. It also reduced the time being spent by the supervisors, walking from one village to another, thereby giving them scope for contributions they were capable of making.

This structure was devised after a workshop on supervision, held in March

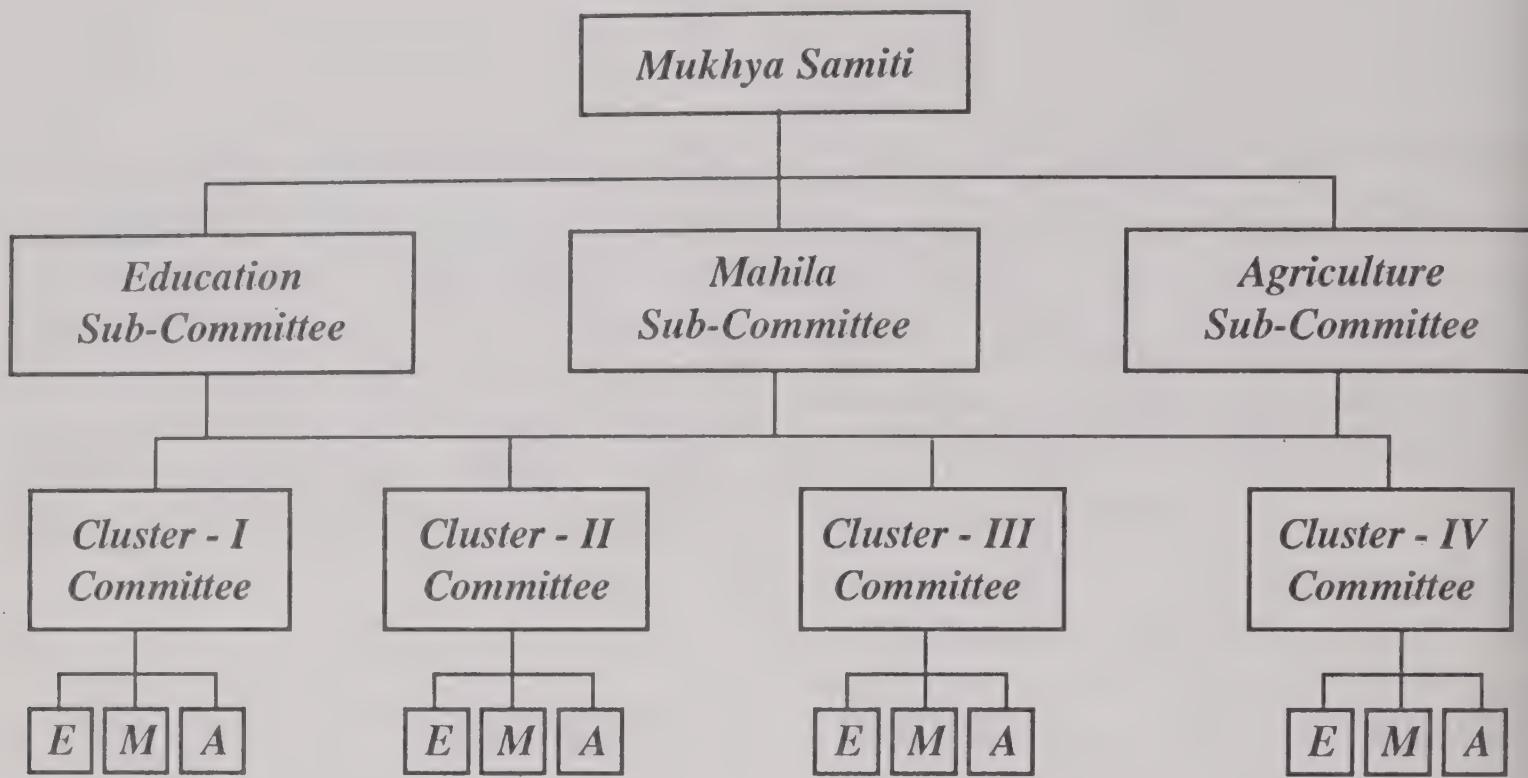
1992 attended by Save the Children Fund (SCF), the funding agency, and consultants from Indian Institute of Management (IIM), which clarified several things for SIDH. An in-house workshop which followed this, to discuss job responsibilities and delegation of authority came up with the recommendation that contiguous villages be grouped together for supervision.

Resource groups were formed, comprising two or three individuals who were available to support and advise the supervisors in the areas of school education, balwadis and *mahila dals*, and the sanitation and agricultural programmes. Anuradha was a part of the balwadi resource group in this period and was also sharing the responsibility with Pawan of overseeing all the programmes.

The cluster concept

In mid-'93 SIDH decided to modify the structure by grouping the entire work area into four clusters and putting one senior team member in-charge of all the activities. (Fig.1) The cluster in-charges (CI) were responsible for monitoring the activities and coordination with the field office. Further, to increase the participation of other members of the team and the community in the various programmes of

Fig.1 ORGANOGRAM 1



E - Education Committee; M - Mahila Committee; A - Agriculture Committee

SIDH, it was decided to form four separate sub-committees in each cluster:

1. Education sub-committee, comprising of cluster-in-charge, senior school and balwadi teachers from each of the schools and balwadis in the cluster, and one member from the community from each of the villages where an education programme was being run.
2. *Mahila dal* sub-committee, again comprising the CI, senior balwadi/school teacher in charge of the various *mahila dals* within the cluster, and one woman from each of the *dals* within the cluster.

3. Agriculture sub-committee, comprising of the CI, senior team member looking after the agriculture/horticulture/forestry programme in the various villages and one member from the community from each village.

4. Cluster sub-committee, where the representatives from each of the above three sub-committees were present.

Thus SIDH had four committees in each cluster, i.e., sixteen committees in the four clusters. There was a similar structure at the top, eg, education committee, which consisted of the 4 CIs, Pawan and

Anuradha and representatives from each of the four education sub-committees; *Mahila Dal* and the Agriculture committees were similarly constituted. Finally there was the *Mukhya Samiti*, which consisted of the 4 CIs, Pawan, Anuradha and representatives from each of the three committees.

The present structure

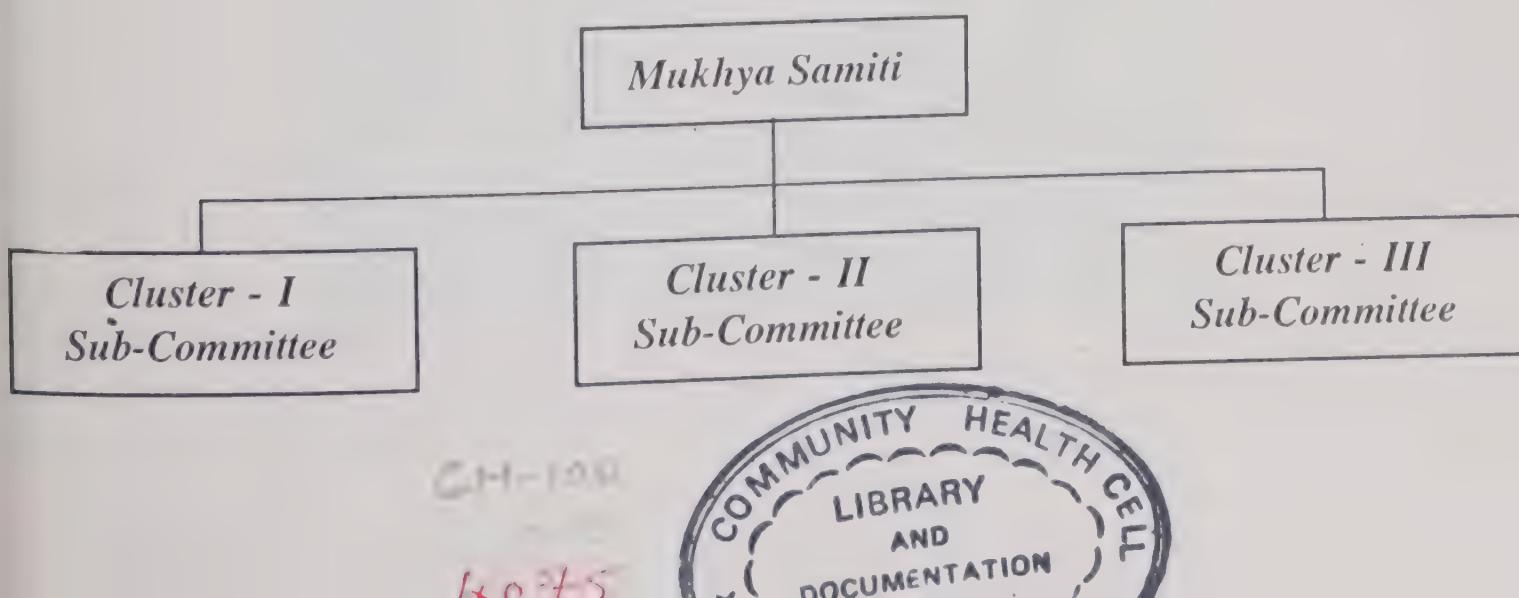
After April '94, this complicated structure was simplified. The clusters were reduced from 4 to 3 by regrouping the villages. And only one subcommittee in each cluster was formed, doing away with the sector-wise committees. Similarly at the *Mukhya Samiti* level, sectional committees were done away with. In this committee, efforts are made to involve all the active team members from each village and active members of the community. (Fig.2)

Part of the structural reorganisation has also involved merging the two emerging categories of school teachers and balwadi teachers, by encouraging cross-

overs between the two. This, along with other trainings that members undergo, is to encourage them, not so much to specialise in one particular technical field, but to learn a variety of skills, so they can develop as community facilitators. All these changes have been preceded by workshops discussing the problems that were being faced, and possible solutions by team members, whose recommendations have resulted in the structural changes adopted and refined over the years.

In addition, a number of areas were decentralised in 1993. To encourage the team to take decisions on their own, and familiarise themselves with accounting and budgeting procedures, the teams have been allotted a sum of Rs 25,000 per cluster, and a sum of Rs 20 per child per year, which is to be spent on what is considered most appropriate, subject to final approval. Quarterly and Annual reports on their work are also submitted and the team formulates annual and five-year targets for SIDH.

Fig.2 ORGANOGRAM 2



Worried about the consequences of too rapid an expansion in terms of reduced manoeuvrability for the organisation, SIDH made a policy decision not to expand further in 1993. Having grown rapidly in the previous two years, the fears were that further expansion might result in bureaucratisation and inertia, as has been observed in large organisations. They have also been gradually reducing budgets and cutting down the student-teacher ratio in their schools towards creating an educational model of two-teacher schools. This, along with their plans for community development and income generation, is what defines the contours of their dream: an alternative educational model which could be financially self-sustaining.

Hidden divide

When SIDH began their school programme, they recruited Class 10 graduates who could be trained to teach in the primary school. These were invariably young boys since no girls in the village had passed class 10 and the older women were not suitable. They also recruited four young girls from Mussoorie to teach in the schools and balwadis. Initially, the girls from Mussoorie thought of themselves as superior and/or were certainly perceived as being superior by the village girls.

When I first joined SIDH, I was intimidated by the Mussoorie girls because I was from the village and they were

from the town. I felt my Hindi wasn't good enough and they were more sophisticated. It took me two months before I could speak my mind. Initially, I was scared of outsiders.

— Mira Kainthura, Supervisor, Balwadis.

This social divide overlapped with the hierarchy that still continues between

There is a significant gender divide between the two groups with the men dominating the school group and women almost exclusively working in the balwadis.

the school and the balwadi group, despite several attempts to counter it. Mira adds:

We used to think schools are superior to balwadis. There were more Mussoorie girls teaching in the school. We used to feel envious and neglected. But not any more, especially after Rukmini joined the balwadi group. After that we felt it was OK, there was no discrimination and there was no reason for us to feel inferior.

It is interesting to explore this hierarchy within the SIDH group, since it is a real one and continues to dog the organisation, even if it is not a source of tension anymore. Apart from the urban vs rural element, there is a significant gender divide between the two groups with the men

dominating the school group and women almost exclusively working in the balwadis. All the boys in the group are either supervisors or in the school group, which is, according to Anuradha and Pawan, miles ahead of the balwadi group, not just in terms of contributing to the curriculum and the school programme, but also in envisaging a direction for the future development of the organisation.

The only man who joined as a balwadi teacher in the first year, left after a year and a half. He was very good with the children and facilitating the women's groups, but left because he couldn't take the peer pressure from the men in the group, who ridiculed him for being the only boy in the group doing a girl's job!

What the teachers say

Most teachers in the balwadi group feel that schools are one rung up the ladder.

— Mira.

I've taught in schools and balwadis. I think teaching in the balwadi is much more difficult, but schools make a more visible impact and are valued more by the villagers.

— Prabha.

I think the exposure is more in schools: when I joined, I was poor in arithmetic, geography and science. I also learnt while I was teaching in school. When I was asked to join the balwadis I was scared my development would stop. I don't see it as a demotion though. I was pleased that I had been chosen to run a model balwadi.

— Rukmini.



From balwadi to school

We don't get enough affirmation. We're not appreciated enough for the work we do.
— Shanti.

Earlier the supervisors were dismissive. They would treat it as 'just singing and dancing.' Now they take it more seriously.
— Pavitra.

Monitoring has become more precise... it was loose earlier. If something was supposed to be done and it wasn't, then the attitude was 'Oh, it'll be done next month.'

→ Shobhan, a cluster supervisor.

I did think it was mostly song and dance. Villagers didn't think too much of them either, at least initially. Then we worked on our (school) syllabus, and it was after that we all got clearer on what the aims and the objectives of the balwadi were. Now the villagers are much more positive about the balwadis as well. They think it's necessary.

— Hukum, another supervisor.

I did think it was mostly song and dance. Villagers didn't think too much of them either. Now the villagers are much more positive.

In retrospect

Pawan and Anuradha between them had divided up responsibilities

within the organisation. Anuradha was responsible for the balwadi programme, they both worked together on the schools programme and Pawan was largely responsible for organisational and financial management.

Pawan says :

For the first two years I felt the balwadi programme wasn't working. There was a lot of theory and playway and sensorial methods, but I wasn't convinced it was being translated into practice. There was a lot of absenteeism. I felt the balwadi programme was working out too expensive in terms of the cost-benefit ratio. In 1992, I was in favour of either disbanding it or strengthening it visibly. Anuradha disagreed. I felt she was too indulgent and protective with them and they were neither committed nor enjoying themselves. It was in 1992, after they came back from the Mobile Crèches' training in Delhi, that I first noted a visible difference in terms of their self-confidence. Since then... Nayarghati made a difference and when they trained the women's group from Delhi, that helped them a lot. The single most important factor has been exposure to a different environment.

We've come a long way. Now there is much more accountability... but I feel that the girls aren't as motivated, especially compared to the school team. The other supervisors were neglecting

balwadis. They now recognise, or have been forced to recognise, their importance. There has been an attempt at conscious sensitisation, and balwadis which were low-priority earlier - have been given the necessary importance.

The new development of two-teacher balwadis extended upto Class 2 along with night schools is a really viable educational model for the hills - it is cheap and can be replicated easily. Certainly, in the next twenty years, I can't see the govt. opening a school in every village. Then this becomes a practical and sustainable alternative.

Anuradha feels Pawan's attitude to the balwadis was dismissive in the early years, and that the supervisors and school team took their cue from him. When he shifted his stance, so did they, and their increasing enthusiasm reflects the change in his attitude to the balwadi. Another gender divide here? Pawan laughs off the accusation:

Its not just my saying so. So many things were happening at the same time. The training workshops, the reorganisation, and the school meeting when they came up with a curriculum identical to the balwadi, that had an enormous impact on the others.

The distinction narrows

The distinctions between the two groups have also blurred considerably,

since now there is a greater overlap between the two. Some balwadi teachers are also teaching in the schools, and Rukmini, one of the best schoolteachers, has been put in charge of developing the model balwadi and strengthening the women's programme. Anuradha says :

However enthusiastic the men in the group are, and whatever initiatives they take at the village level, there will always be a barrier with the village women. Ultimately, it is the women in the group who have to take on community development.

Why is it that despite all their attempts to bridge the divide between the schools and the balwadis, the school group still retains a perceptible edge and is 'more motivated'?

Ultimately, it is the women in the group who have to take on community development.

Apart from the educational attainments - and here some of the women are catching up fast - there appears to be one major factor which works against women: the very heavy burden of housework that they carry. 90% of the balwadi teachers live at home, where they have to share

the unusually heavy workload of hill women. 90% of the schoolteachers live away from home - and even if they did, men have a much lighter workload on the home front. The only concession made to a woman teacher is that she doesn't have to work in the fields. The man can, however, devote more time and energy.

Anuradha feels the other factor is that the men tend to perceive their work much more in terms of long-term career development, which the women largely do not. This is certainly true if the women's answers are compared to that given by Shobhan, a cluster supervisor. He is enthusiastic, comes up with very good suggestions and demonstrates a lot of initiative. He says he enjoys the work. He dropped out of his B.A. course, and he had given up on ever getting a job.

Being a Tehri dam oustee, he was hoping he'd be able to get a job reserved for local people there, but the anti-dam agitation altered his plans...then he joined SIDH and he liked the idea of working in a village... He says :

Money's necessary, but I don't worry too much about it. What I'm getting is enough, but I want to prepare myself for a few years later when I'll need more. I want to improve my market value.

It remains a matter of speculation whether there is an inadvertent affirmation of masculine values regarding achievement and leadership, which are perceived with a bias most remain unaware of. Similarly, women are seen as more nurturing creatures...and appropriate for early child care. Anuradha feels she is still grappling with these questions. It remains a grey area.

One major factor which works against women: the very heavy burden of housework that they carry. The only concession made to a woman teacher is that she doesn't have to work in the fields.

7 COSTS AND BENEFITS

SIDH has been trying to integrate the education programme with experiments to combine schools with balwadis. Some schools have started including very young children by adding on pre-primary classes; while some balwadis have been upgraded, where there is no school, and the teacher trained to cope upto Class 2. Hence it is difficult to segregate expenses between the various components (schools,

balwadis, Non Formal Education (NFEs) and even adult education classes). There is another important factor to be considered while doing the costing – school and balwadi teachers are not just restricted to mere teaching in the centres but act as facilitators in other programmes e.g., *mahila dals*, sanitation, credit schemes, IGP etc. The figures below give an indication of costs of the various activities of SIDH. (Table 4)

Table 4

Cost data on balwadi/NFEs

	Balwadis	Schools/NFEs
No. of centres	12	12
No. of children	210	307
a. Stipend to teachers	1,16,000	1,55,000
b. Teaching materials & extra-curricular activities – 35% to balwadis; 65% to schools/NFEs	32,000	60,500
c. Stipend to supervisors – 25% to balwadis; 35% to schools/NFEs	21,675	30,345
d. Stipend to support staff – 25% to balwadis; 25% to NFEs	20,350	20,350
e. Training expenditure – 25% to balwadis; 25% to schools/NFEs	56,550	75,400
Total recurring expenses	2,71,575	3,66,565
Cost per centre	22631	30597
Cost per child	1293	1194

Fixed costs relate to the costs of construction of buildings and huts. The decision to construct, the size of the structure, the type of materials, etc., is left to the community. On an average, the cost including labour is as follows:

Total cost for a 2 room construction	:	Rs. 40,000
Contribution by SIDH	:	Rs. 15,000
Initial expenses by SIDH on desk, durries, clock	:	Rs. 6,000

SIDH has been charging a small fee of Rs.1 to 2 per child per month in some of the balwadis and between Rs.5 to 10 in the schools. This collection is not taken by the society, but is kept in separate bank accounts in the name of the particular school and is managed by a committee of villagers. Any income from income-generation programmes also goes into this account.

A comparison

To compare with the costs of education in the State system of education, some figures on numbers and expenditures on primary education in U.P and India are given in Table 5.

These figures suggest that the cost of elementary education per child in UP (1991-92) is Rs.581, far lower than SIDH's figures (1993-94) of Rs.1,293 for the balwadi and Rs.1,105 for the school. However, the validity of the official estimate cannot be assumed as it does not

appear to include Central assistance, and besides, refers to an earlier period.

Though the SIDH figures for schools are considerably higher, the schools also do perform very well. That may be because the student-teacher ratio in SIDH schools is much lower, 15:1 compared to 63:1 in govt schools. These figures in any case might be misleading since there is no available break-up of figures relating to the hill schools. There is likely to be a higher student-teacher ratio in any case in all schools in the hills, because of the demographic contours of the region and the different arithmetic.

The muddiness of the figures available makes it difficult to work out a cost-benefit analysis. Going by the reaction of the villagers, they do appreciate and prefer SIDH to govt. schools, in some cases walking longer to reach them. (This is not encouraged by SIDH though, as they see their role as a supplementary) The main problem people have with the government schools is the regular absenteeism of the teachers, particularly in hill areas, where monitoring is almost non-existent, because of the physically difficult terrain. The exceptional results of the SIDH schools in the Class 5 Board examinations is another major factor which has affected the villagers, in their favour.

Where SIDH would appear to score significantly over govt. schools is in the perception of the villagers as being more efficient, with low drop-out rate,

Table 5 Comparative statistics on elementary education in U.P and India

Uttar Pradesh			India		
Primary	Upper Primary	Total Elementary	Primary	Upper Primary	Total Elementary
Enrolment (in millions)					
1988-89	12.04	2.87	14.91	68.09	37.64
1989-90	12.79	3.05	15.84	69.30	38.85
1990-91	13.51	3.10	16.61	70.37	39.81
1991-92	14.82	3.50	18.32	73.47	40.78
No. of schools					
1988-89	74705	16652	91357	548059	144145
1989-90	74275	14549	88824	550700	143747
1990-91	76545	14582	91127	560935	151456
1991-92	78085	15328	93413	565786	152077
Expenditure (Plan + non-Plan in crores)					
1988-89		655.5			5539.8
1989-90		1010.8			6888.3
1990-91		1210.1			8047.2
1991-92		1065.1			8047.2

Source: National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration

no absenteeism, community participation by the teacher in other development projects and development of local human resources.

The benefits are difficult to evaluate beyond what the villages feel about the programme. Looking at their responses, they are all very positive and feel

if the balwadi closed down, they would be worse off in several ways. Other villages are also keen to extend the programme in their own areas, but SIDH is moving slowly and opening new ones only where they feel the teachers are trained to the required level. They feel that though it is an expensive programme, it is mainly the intangible benefits - which are difficult to calculate - that outweigh other considerations.

Sustainability

At the moment, all costs are borne by one source, the Save the Children Fund. It is the development of local human resources that has been the most important achievement, with long-term implications for the development of the area.

Though it is an expensive programme, it is mainly the intangible benefits - which are difficult to calculate - that outweigh other considerations.

The organisation is working entirely with local people - 95% of them from local villages and the others from Mussoorie. They are constantly upgrading their skills, and their plan is that in five years time it should be possible for most team members to run their own school, while the balwadis, they hope can be

entirely handed over to be run by the *mahila dals*. It is towards this process that SIDH has gradually been decreasing their budgets (the budget for the education programme in 1993-94 and 1994-95 remains the same, even though salaries have increased. In real terms, that is a decrease, which they have effected by bringing down other costs) and reducing the student-teacher ratio in the schools, to work towards a two-teacher education and community centre that can effectively function as an alternative model for educational and community needs in the hill areas.

It is because of these long-term plans that team members are also being encouraged to increase their budgeting and accounting skills and submit quarterly reports on their work. In June '93 when the schools team had their annual workshop, they looked at the budgets and took a decision that they would attempt to cut down on expenses and the student-teacher ratio wherever possible, without affecting the quality of the teaching.

As a result of these attempts, the number of balwadis in '94 went up to 12 from 8 in the previous year, despite 4 balwadi teachers having left in '93 and no new recruitments being made. In 1993, 3 balwadis were closed down because they were found not to be functioning satisfactorily. The increase in the number of balwadis was only possible because of inducting the schoolteachers into

the balwadi programme as soon as it became feasible to do so.

Towards self-reliance

It is also the greater awareness in the team about financial accountability and sustainability, that has led to the formulation of their ambitious five-year-plans to make the programme self-sustaining. They are also attempting to work out local arrangements to pay the *mahila dal* helper in kind, if their income-generation plans do not succeed in generating the income that has been projected.

Whether these plans work out remains to be seen. SIDH is helping them with institutional support - a local Rotary Club may also be donating a room in the future - but they are attempting to raise resources locally as much as possible. Villages are being encouraged to contribute towards books and materials.

It will be a difficult project; the small size of the villages - the average village size is 20 families - with about 20 children to a village, make the economics of running a balwadi in every village an expensive proposition. But that has not yet contained the enthusiasm of the team.

It is the development of local human resources that has been the most important achievement. The organisation is working entirely with local people - 95% of them from local villages and the others from Mussoorie.

8 FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

Replicability

Having spent five years developing the balwadis, SIDH feels that a programme that can be replicated easily has been evolved. There is a training manual which provides a basic outline for beginners, by clarifying the concept, content and management of a balwadi. A calendar provides the outline for a monthly lesson plan for language, environment, numbers and general knowledge; and a diary provides a self-monitoring and management tool for the balwadi teacher. A book on environmental songs and stories is also available.

A 10-day training session has been devised for a minimally literate group. If this session is followed up by an additional 2-3 days a month of training, in a year's time the participant would reach an acceptable level of competence. The area-specific elements that have been used in the training programmes and which would need local modifications to suit a different situation, are the local songs and dances.

The unique features of the training programme would appear to be the special emphasis given to the personal growth and creativity of the trainee. Meditation sessions are encouraged.

Anuradha now says :

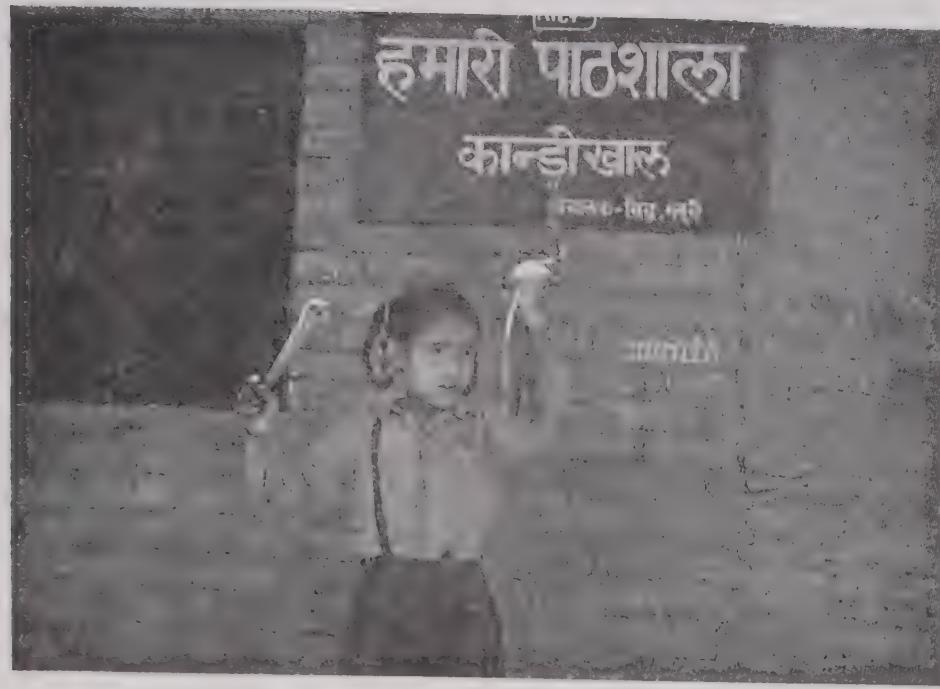
75% of the battle is won when you succeed in shifting attitudes towards self-evaluation.

The model being evolved - a two-teacher educational centre that will combine a night school and other community development initiatives should work out at a cost of Rs. 1,200 per child per year.

Alternative school model

The alternative school model emerged after five years of SIDH's experience with the particular problems faced by hill villages. In the hills, there is a government school in each *gram sabha*, but because the villages are small and scattered, the *gram sabha* is usually a cluster of 5-6 villages. The nearest village school is often a two hour climb for a five-year-old. By the time the children are old enough to walk back and forth, it is late for them to begin studying and drop-outs increase. This is particularly the case for the girl child, who has to look after her younger brothers and sisters and cope with housework.

Many girls are pulled out of school after Class 2 in order to help at home,



Alternative schooling

sometimes even when a primary school exists in the village. Sometimes boys too, have to help at home and drop out. The only solution in such a case is to have evening classes in the village. There is also a bias against education - villagers say schooling creates and reinforces the gap between mental and manual labour. It has, in the hills led to large scale migration, alienating the young from their land, and from farming as an occupation.

Our girls who go to school do not want to dirty their hands in the field or milking the cow.

It was with these factors in mind that SIDH evolved the alternate school model, called a *bal-patshala*. It is:

1. A balwadi that extends upto Class 2 in the mornings

2. A non-formal education centre in the evenings - with special classes for Class 5 - for those children who work during the day. Ultimately it would be run by volunteers and school children from the village.

The *bal-patshala* will be managed by the *mahila dals*, who will monitor its functioning. A village woman recruit will be trained for five years to run the *patshala*. After Class 2, children will be encouraged to join the nearest govt. school.

A village corpus fund will be set up and the *patshala* teacher will collect fees or payment in kind from the villagers. SIDH is also exploring the possibility of setting up income-generation projects for women and if these are successful, then a percentage of the

profits would be donated to the village corpus fund. SIDH has recently begun *patshalas* in three villages.

Policies for change : some suggestions

The main policy changes that SIDH would recommend relate to the special needs of the hill areas.

- Make special provisions for hill areas, taking their geography and demographic features into account.
- Enhance the skills of the teacher/childcare worker to include community initiatives, to build up strong community support.
- Pay higher wages to the local child care worker. At the moment, wages for anganwadi workers are abysmally low, reflecting the low value placed on work that is crucial for long-term development. In contrast, primary school teachers are comparatively very well paid. A two-pronged policy could be adopted:
 - increase wages and involvement of anganwadi worker
 - recruit local youth - who can walk in the hills and stand the cold - and train them to run primary schools at lower wages than govt. school teachers.
- Alter current recruitment policies and place more emphasis on the sensitivity of the person

recruited. This has been successfully done in government programmes - like the *Mahila Samakhya* for instance. The child care worker should be like, and paid at par with, the *Mahila Samakhya's sahyoginis*.

The *bal-patshala* will be managed by the *mahila dals*, who will monitor its functioning. A village woman recruit will be trained for five years to run the *patshala*

- Conduct regular training programmes that would emphasise playway methods and the creativity of the teacher/child care worker. The most positive effect of this would be that the teacher-worker stops getting bored. Once they begin to have fun, and enjoy themselves, they inevitably teach better, feel empowered and absenteeism drops. Aspects of training should be combined for the school teacher and child care worker to begin a process of integrating them. Central to all the above, is the focus on changes in attitude, through sessions on personal growth and meditation.

9 EPILOGUE

A personal note

It may be a coincidence, but I did spend the summer of '94 travelling in Garhwal and Kumaon, and among other things, looking at balwadis supported by the Uttarakhand Seva Nidhi. I saw balwadis in Kumaon, and the Chamba and Chamoli districts in Garhwal, run by different NGOs. I was impressed with the balwadis I saw in Daniya, near Almora, which have been run by the Laxmi Ashram in Kausani. Like SIDH, they seemed to me to place a lot of emphasis on playway methods, and using sensorial materials. The others, I found, tend to teach only by rote - reading charts aloud etc., which makes for bored teachers and children. But, from several discussions with representatives of NGOs and others, it seemed that there is an attitude that is dismissive of the use of play

materials and child-centred methods as an urban elite import, and as an indulgence that they can ill-afford in the circumstances in which they work.

This attitude needs to be explored and discussed with the agencies involved. Perhaps the hidden curriculum of authoritarian teaching methods is to demand submission to authority and it is no coincidence that we find such methods popular and prevalent in rural and working class areas. Is the privilege of learning to question authority and think independently only to be limited to our elite schools as a matter of policy? If the politics of the hidden curriculum could be brought up and discussed with other child care agencies, it might have an impact on current policies and practices.

Is the privilege of learning to question authority
and think independently only to be limited
to our elite schools?

Appendix 1

A NOTE ON JAUNPUR

SIDH is working in about 30 villages of Jaunpur block in the Tehri-Garhwal district of U.P. It is in the central Himalayan region, in an altitude range of 3000-7000 m. above sea level. An *adivasi* block in the north-west of Tehri district, Jaunpur, unlike the adjoining Jaunsar-Bawar area, has never been officially declared a tribal area. Jaunsar Bawar was declared a tribal block in 1967, and has reaped the benefits that go with that official status ever since.

Jaunpur is by all classic indicators a 'backward' area with irrigated land being less than 3%. Socially also, it has been relatively isolated from mainstream Garhwali society, with its own language, culture and customs. Economically, it is primarily a subsistence economy, though over the years, with land degradation, the people only manage to grow enough for 7 months in the year and have to supplement their income through selling milk and working as labourers in Mussoorie.

The villages tend to be far-flung and relatively inaccessible because of the terrain. The average village size is between 7 to 35 families, which has an impact on literacy, since numbers determine the number of schools opened. Literacy has traditionally been very low in this area : the average literacy rate for UP is 55%, and for hill areas in UP it ranges from 71% to 82% for men and from 23% to 59% for women. Compared to these figures, the literacy rate in Jaunpur is a surprisingly low 30.82% for men and 12.10% for women. (Census 1981) Therefore, unlike other hill areas, the men do not migrate to the plains to work and the communities continue to be relatively well-knit.

Compared to other communities, Jaunpur women are relatively better off: custom accepts the change of marriage partners if they so desire on payment of a token bride price. Income from poultry, goats and wine (only sold locally in the villages) traditionally belongs to the women to spend as they wish.

Appendix 2

TEACHING/LEARNING MATERIAL DEVELOPED BY SIDH

1. Audio Cassette of Balwadi Songs (Action songs, Language, Numbers and Environment)- some Hindi adaptations of popular rhymes, some specially written about issues dealing with the environment.

2. A book of environmental songs and stories - a collection of songs and stories for little children about the magic and mystery of the environment. Contents range from stories about rainfall, life cycle of a butterfly, how a seed grows, story of the soil, hygiene, and the growing danger of plastic bags. The book hopes to trigger creative ideas in teachers for many more stories and songs based on everyday things in a child's world. The introduction to the book gives a guideline on how to make a curriculum around environmental themes. (Rs. 5)

3. *Hamari Balwadi* - A beginner's manual for teachers on how to begin a balwadi. It clarifies the concept of a balwadi and provides a guideline for building

- a conducive learning environment
- the routine activities and
- management of the balwadi.

It also contains directions on how to make low-cost sensorial material, a time-table and the need to make it according to the short attention span of children. A chapter on building community support and on health and nutrition is included, as well as some ideas on and how to extend the balwadi into non-formal classes. Appendices on different kinds of songs, games, stories, job description of the balwadi teacher and a check list for balwadi evaluation are also given. (Rs 30)

4. Balwadi Calendar - This is a planner for the teacher and also a monitoring tool, giving the minimum levels of learning for three groups in a balwadi from 2-1/2 to 6 years. The three groups are based on learning ability and not age of the child, and changed whenever the child is ready for it. In the first group, there is a lot of emphasis on songs, stories and EPL. In the second group, there is emphasis on learning language and numbers with the help of games and sensorial materials. In the third group (outgoing group) there is emphasis upon recognizing and writing of words and numbers. Each month there are learning levels given for EPL, Language, Numbers and general

knowledge. There is also an environment theme around which stories, poems, games, projects, art and craft and other activities are to be strung together. Simple ways on how to expand one word into activities are also given. (Rs 10)

5. *Balwadi Sahayika* - A Balwadi Teacher's Diary that has the following records :

- a profile of the children
- lesson plans
- home visits
- creative inputs
- care and making of material
- PTA meets
- attendance, problems and suggestions
- experiences

6. *Mein (Me)* - A workbook for children of Class 1 to be used where older children come to the balwadis.

Appendix 3

DAILY TIME TABLE

Activities	Group	Time
Fetching the children, welcome	-	-
Cleaning the balwadi	-	-
Washing the children (toilet training)	All	30 min
Prayer	All	-
<i>Shanthi Khel</i>	All	-
Attendance	All	10 min
<i>Dainik Baat</i> (informal chat)	All	10 min
Learning activities in small groups (EPL, Language, Numbers)	Small	15 min
<i>Swatantra Khel</i> (free play)	Small	25 min
Recess (tiffin)	All	30 min
Action songs	All	10 min
General Knowledge	Small	10 min
Language/numbers through charts	All	10 min
Story	All	10 min
Drawing	All	10 min
Outdoor games/nature walk	All	25 min
<i>Mangal Maitri</i>	All	10 min

Appendix 4

TRAINING

SIDH has spent a great deal of time and effort in training their team members in a variety of skills like running a school, balwadi, non-formal and adult education classes, preparing the curriculum and lesson plans, teaching methods and preparation of teaching materials. The team members have been exposed to health care and preventive measures.

Training has been organised to give them information/exposure/skills in conducting village surveys, interviews, PRA (Participatory Rural Appraisal) TOT (Training of Trainers), team building, management and income generation activities eg., production of candles, chalk, incense sticks etc. Some team members have trained in animal husbandry and poultry farming techniques. SIDH also organises training programmes for villagers on compost-making, water-harvesting techniques and bio-gas technology. *Vipassana* meditation is encouraged in the team and almost all members have gone to at least one 10-day course in this meditation practice.

SIDH lays great deal of stress on personal development. A contemporary training workshop might begin with participants recollecting and narrating childhood memories. These are analysed within the group, with particular emphasis on children's fears and the incidents are turned into stories for children by the participants. Alternately, they may begin by classifying their problems - recently four major problem areas were identified:

- cleanliness
- personal leadership qualities
- village interactions
- use and repair of sensorial materials.

Each category is then broken down into further segments and the points raised are discussed within the group. Other methods used are role playing, feedback and analysis by other members within the group.

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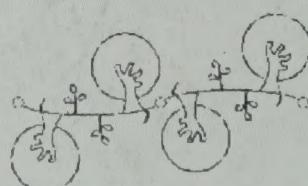
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The SURAKSHA series documents innovative programmes of Early Childhood Care and Education in India, especially those which address the intersecting needs of women, young children and girls. Carefully researched and written by scholars in the field, each study looks in depth at one programme, highlighting its achievements, philosophy and goals. The series as a whole represents the rich diversity of experience within the country, with a range in terms of geography, auspices and organisational pattern. Scholars and students of Child Development and child welfare would find the series an invaluable source of information, as well as policy makers, voluntary agencies and others concerned with programming for women's and children's development.



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